

H.R. 3217, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3217) to provide for the conveyance of several small parcels of National Forest System land in the Apalachicola National Forest, Florida, to resolve boundary discrepancies involving the Mt. Trial Primitive Baptist Church of Wakulla County, Florida, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to this matter be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 3217) was read the third time and passed.

LIMITING TRANSFER OF CERTAIN COMMODITY CREDIT CORPORATION FUNDS

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent that the Agriculture Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 2856, and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2856) to limit the transfer of certain Commodity Credit Corporation funds between conservation programs for technical assistance for other programs.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

(At the request of Mr. DASCHLE, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

• Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I am pleased to support the passage of S. 2856, legislation that will restore the conservation funding commitment Congress and the administration made to farmers and ranchers in the 2002 farm bill. I applaud the leadership of Agriculture Committee Chairman COCHRAN and Ranking Member HARKIN for their leadership to correct the shortfall in conservation technical assistance funding. For the last 2 years I have worked to correct this problem and am pleased to join my colleagues in this effort.

Despite historic funding conservation levels in the 2002 farm bill, family farmers and ranchers offering to restore wetlands, or offering to change the way they farm to improve air and water quality continue to be rejected when they seek USDA conservation assistance. Producers are being turned away due to the Department of Agriculture's decision to divert over \$200 million from working lands conservation programs to pay for the cost of administering the Conservation Reserve Program, CRP, and the Wetlands Reserve Program, WRP, over the last 2

years. In particular, USDA diverted significant funds from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, EQIP, the Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program, FRPP, the Grasslands Reserve Program, and the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, WHIP, to pay for CRP and WRP technical assistance.

The 2002 farm bill clearly intended USDA to use mandatory funds from the Commodity Credit Corporation, CCC, to pay for conservation technical assistance. The plain language of the statute, the General Accounting Office, and every Member of Congress who had a hand in writing the farm bill support this interpretation of the farm bill.

Our legislation would override USDA's decision and prevent funds from working lands incentive programs like EQIP and WHIP from being used to pay for the technical assistance costs of CRP. The House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation has already approved similar legislation, H.R. 1907, requiring each program to pay for its own technical assistance needs. Our legislation parallels that effort. Simply put our amendment would require the administration to honor the 2002 farm bill and mandate that technical assistance for each program is derived from funds provided for that program.

By providing more than \$6.5 billion for working lands programs like EQIP and WHIP in the 2002 farm bill, Congress dramatically increased funds to help farmers manage working lands to produce food and fiber and simultaneously enhance water quality and wildlife habitat. For example, EQIP helps share the cost of a broad range of land management practices that help the environment, include more efficient use of fertilizers and pesticides, and innovative technologies to store and reuse animal waste. In combination, these working lands programs will provide farmers the tools and incentives they need to help meet our major environmental challenges.

Full funding for working lands incentive programs like EQIP and WHIP is vital not only in helping farmers and ranchers improve their farm management, but also in meeting America's most pressing environmental challenges. Because 70 percent of the American landscape is private land, farming dramatically affects the health of America's rivers, lakes and bays and the fate of America's rare species. Most rare species depend upon private lands for the survival, and many will become extinct without help from private landowners. When farmers and ranchers take steps to help improve air and water quality or assist rare species, they can face new costs, new risks, or loss of income. Conservation programs help share these costs, underwrite these risks, or offset these losses of income. Unless Congress provides adequate resources for these programs, there is little reason to hope that our farmers and ranchers will be able to

help to meet these environmental challenges.

In addition, USDA conservation programs promote regional equity in farm spending. More than 90 percent of USDA spending flows to a handful of large farmers in 15 mid-western and southern States. As a result, many farmers and ranchers who are not eligible for traditional subsidies, including dairy farmers, ranchers, and fruit and vegetable farmers, rely upon conservation programs to boost farm and ranch income and to ease the cost of environmental compliance. Unlike commodity subsidies, conservation payments flow to all farmers and all regions. But, the farmers and ranchers who depend upon these programs, farmers, and ranchers who already receive a disproportionately small share of USDA funds, have faced a disproportionately large cut in spending.

By passing this legislation Congress and the administration will correct the shortfall in conservation technical assistance funding by directing USDA to use CCC funds to provide technical assistance to USDA conservation program. This legislation restores the clear intent of the authors of the 2002 farm bill relating to the payment of conservation technical assistance. •

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to this matter be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 2856) was read the third time and passed, as follows:

S. 2856

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1241 of the Food Security Act of 1985 (16 U.S.C. 3841) is amended by striking subsection (b) and inserting the following:

“(b) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—Effective for fiscal year 2005 and each subsequent fiscal year, Commodity Credit Corporation funds made available for each of the programs specified in paragraphs (1) through (7) of subsection (a)—

“(1) shall be available for the provision of technical assistance for the programs for which funds are made available; and

“(2) shall not be available for the provision of technical assistance for conservation programs specified in subsection (a) other than the program for which the funds were made available.”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) takes effect on October 1, 2004.

INTELLIGENCE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

Mr. FRIST. I ask unanimous consent the Intelligence Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 4548, the intelligence reauthorization bill, and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.